

["Bill" Knox]

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"Bill" Knox:

"Well, kiddo, how they goin'? Me? Oh, just the same, they hain't no change worth talkin' about. You don't want to hear no more of my troubles, now, do you? Seem's though that's all I got to talk about these days is my troubles. And everybody's got them. That's one thing they hain't never no shortage of is trouble. Fella ain't got any, right away he'll manufacture some. Fella was talkin' to me the other day, works in the clock shop. He says they were after him to jine the union and he says what the hell should he jine for? Says he was satisfied with his job and everything, why should he jine? Says when all the rest of 'em came in, then he'd do it too, and not before.

"Well, I says to him I says, s'pose they all figger the way you do, how they goin' to git anywhere with the union? s'pose everybody waits for the next fella, the way you're doin', I says, they'll never git to first base. I says you're satisfied with your job now, sure, I says, they're treatin' you all right. But I says, how do you know where you'll stand a year from today? You ain't got no protection, I says, if they decide to cut your pay, or somethin', what are you gonna do? You just got to take it.

"He says, well, what's the use of borryin' trouble. The company treated me all right so far, he says, I ain't got no reason to think they'll do me a dirty trick. I says, kiddo, I says, I worked in big shops and small shops in my life and I know what I's talkin' about. I worked with knifemakers most of my life, and them fellas were strong for unions, right from the old country. They'd tried the idea out and 2 they knew it was good before they ever came to this country. So I says, I know what I's talking about. It's the only protection for a workin'

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man. The big fellas don't give a damn for you and the only way you can talk turkey to them is to organize. But I still couldn't convince him.

"The only way he'll learn is from experience. He'll find out, but it'll probably be too late. They say since the union come in down here, they're already beginnin' to treat the boys a little better. But of course if they don't git enough members to git their franchise, the whole thin'll fall through, and then they'll be right back where they started. They'll git their noses shoved right into it again, soon's the big fellas see the union ain't goin'to amount to nothin'.

"Fella was tellin' me the other day, he says, over in Bristol, he says, they're tryin' to organize the New Departure. And he says, the big fellas decided to put them on short time to throw the fear of God into them. So they began to lose orders. Fafner's over in New Britain began to git all their ball bearin' work. And they say that Sloane, he's the president of General Motors, he called up the New Departure fellas and he says what the hell's the matter, we cant git the work out there? And they told him they were puttin' the fear of God into the help, so's they'd forgit about orgenizin'. And he says, to hell with that, he says, let 'em organize. Git the work out, he says, no matter what. We're losin' business. That's the story I got.

"And over in Fafner's, not long ago, they got to puttin' the fellas in the tool room on piece work. Can you imagine that? That's somethin' I never heard of before, kiddo, I don't know about you. Well they wouldn't stand for it. They called in union organizers and got the 3 men organized, and they said to the big fellas, they said, no more piece work in the tool room. They got a flat day rate and a fifty hour week. That's what a fella told me.

"Well kiddo, it don't make much difference to me. I don't work in the shop no more. But I hate to see the workin' man ground down, and I can't see where he's got a chance these days unless he organizes. You got to fight for everything you git. The old knifemakers knew that, a long time ago, but they were reasonable about it, kiddo. When they figgered they deserved more money they asked for it, and if they didn't git it they went on strike,

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but they usually got it. Because they stuck together. The big fellas couldn't break a knifemakers' strike. They couldn't git the help, and they couldn't make knives with greenhorn labor.

“So I don't know, kiddo, what it's all comin' to. It hain't no skin offa my arm, in a way, I won't never be workin' in a shop again.

“Well, I's goin' up and have a peek at that new school. They got it open for public inspection today, and I might's well have a look. It'll be the first and last one I'll git, kiddo. I don't expect to go to school again, neither.”